

How Far Can You Really Hit a Softball?

By Chris Gallagher, City of Glendale Parks & Recreation

If you've stepped on a softball field in the past few years, it's obvious this isn't your father's game any more. Like other sports, technology has improved the performance of players, thus making playing fields, courts and courses a little less intimidating to those participating. In softball for example, because of the bats now being used during league and tournament play, softball associations have put restrictions on softballs to limit their flight. They are even tinkering with the idea of moving base and pitching distances back a few feet, keeping the safety of the players in mind.

These examples prompted the City of Glendale to offer a league from the past. The first of its kind "Men's All Wood Bat Softball League," was created as an experimental program during the 2003 summer adult softball season. The league even provided bats for teams who did not have them. Unfortunately, due to the limited number of fields during the summer months, the department turned away six teams in a league that was limited to eight.

The league allowed unlimited over-the-fence home runs (if they can hit them), as well as higher compression softballs in order to give the participants the much-needed advantage they are used to. Taunting the possible participants by using phrases like "LETS SEE HOW FAR YOU CAN REALLY HIT A SOFTBALL" and "GUYS WITH BIG EGOS NEED NOT APPLY" brought out the softball traditionalist. Brad Pilon, an avid softball player for the past 15 years like the idea of the program so much, he registered his team to play. Asked what he liked most about the league after only four games he said, "It equalizes the playing field like it was intended to be. Game scores are close, more strategy has to be used, and it brings the defense back into the game." Brad's team is anxious to participate in one of the two wood bat leagues Glendale will be offering in its fall program.

The department also has a "Men's All Wood Bat Softball Tournament" scheduled at Sahuarro Ranch Park on Saturday, November 8, 2003. Revenue generated from the tournament will benefit the City's youth sports programs. If you think a \$350.00 softball bat makes you stronger, let's see how far you can really hit a softball with a \$15.00 wooden one. Players with big egos need not apply. For more information contact the Glendale Parks and Recreation Department at (623)930-2820.